

# MINSK economic NEWS

1994. January

No. 1 (13)

## Every dog has its day

### Scandal instead of elections

By Roman YAKOVLEVSKY

In many countries the reaction to the results of the Russian election of December 12 was ambiguous. By that time the Belarusian Parliament was in its second month of sitting. The Parliament had been expected to make a decision whether to hold or not to hold an early election in Belarus. However, the deputies decided it was more appropriate to hear and discuss a report by a temporary deputy committee looking into the activities of the commercial entities set up by the authorities. Deputy Mr. Alexander Lukashenko was in charge of the committee. Most deputies combine their main jobs with the legislative activities. Alexander Lukashenko himself is working as a director of a state farm.

Before the parliamentary hearing of the committee report the government had been expected to make public its new personal composition and its structural changes. Prime Minister Mr. Vyacheslav Kebich had also declared Russia would remove its customs from the Belarusian border since December 15. Neither the former nor the latter happened in December.

Many observers had expected Lukashenko's report would make public the facts of dubious activities by the high-ranking executive power branch officials. Under a decision taken by the deputies, the report was broadcast by the national radio and published by the major Belarusian newspapers. Our citizens have heard and read many interesting things about their politicians, the opposition being no exception. For instance, the rapporteur declared there are just a few honest people within the parliamentary opposition. Thus, according to Lukashenko, member of the opposition Mr. Nikolai Markevich was gaining personal profits from his business with a charity fund. In a very peculiar move deputy Markevich compared Alexander Lukashenko with Vladimir Zhirinovskiy. As a response, Lukashenko called Markevich "Adolf", evidently hinting to Markevich's resemblance with the Nazi leader. Then a real scandal started.

After that Lukashenko accused in his report Parliamentary Speaker Mr. Stanislav Shushkevich, allegedly involved in financial machinations related to "building work at four sites". To the address of the Speaker there were allusions pronounced of conducting activities incompatible with the national interests of Belarus.

Please see, The session closed doors page 4



Sergey GRITS

Eastern Calendar tells us 1994 is the year of the Dog. This year's Dog needs to be of the kindly domestic breed. We can't stand anymore wild and ferocious years. We know, every dog has its own day. Let's hope this year we will enjoy 365 of them.

### Whom to vote for



Once an active member of the BPF Board and fighter against the communist ideology Yuri DRAKOKHRUST today is neither with the former nor with the latter.

The early election of spring 1994 was the hackney topic of all the political battles fought through 1993. The attitude to the event on behalf of the actors on the Belarusian political stage was undergoing changes: whereas in the beginning of the year the communists and the Popular Movement of Belarus controlled by them saw the early election as nothing more than a destabilization weapon in the hands of the treacherous democrats, now they are also ready for a fight. Nowadays there is not a political organisation left in this country, which is immune to the idea of facing the voters in spring. The Republic's chief statesmen, Stanislav Shushkevich and Vyacheslav Kebich, have been in public advocating a new election, too. However, all the partisan and state considerations are quite capable of retreating in face of the simple human desire of the present

people's deputies to stay a little longer in the parliamentary seats.

Let us assume the parties, politicians, crisis and external factors succeed in forcing the parliament to decide on an early election, the first ever free election in Belarus. Let us go even further in our assumptions, although it is a bit far-fetched, and suppose the election is going to be really free and comply with a more or less decorous election law. Suppose everything will be the way it should be. It leaves just one little question to be answered: whom to vote for.

It needs no explanation whatsoever that one does not feel like voting for the communists and their comrades from the Popular Movement of Belarus. They say in some other countries the communists have repented their misdeeds, transformed and social-democratized to the extent people let them in the parliaments, but also to de-

cent homes. Everything can be, who knows. We don't have it so hard, the Belarusian communists have preserved their pure original Marxist-Leninist image and even done their best to boost it up. Previously, under the USSR and the CPSU, the Minsk party bosses, although with the utmost reluctance, had to adjust their clumsy politics and troglodyte ideology to the new perestroika breeze blowing from the Kremlin. Now the guys are sovereign: they are free to choose between standing shoulder-to-shoulder with Kim Il Sung in his fight against the "world imperialism octopus" and feeding along with Zyuganov and Ampilov the people with the nutritious ideas of the Great October. The domestic Leninists are reluctant to blur their image with social democratic allegories: you'll get exactly what they promise.

The fact that the Communist Party is no longer led by blasé connoisseurs of the life's secret vices, but rather by energetic fanatics and aggressive retired folks, does not serve to improve the image of their party, fanatics are no better than cynics. In brief, what is the use of asking any questions? No one wants voting for GULAG.

Please see, Why I don't feel like... page 5

### Money, money

By Alexander BURDA

Let us try and take a farewell look at 1993, a year of the Belarusian rabbit.

Last month two opposite tendencies peacefully coexisted: falling hard currency market rates and growing cash circulation rates. Indeed, the IBEM dollar rate was growing till December 7, while after December 9 it began falling down to reach BRB 6,990 on December 23. This is to say that the year's record high of BRB 7,775 to USD 1 on December 7 to 9 had a very short life. The somber predictions of BRB 10,000 to USD 1 by the end of the year did not come true, however, the experts have not turned optimists. Now they have shifted their fatal ten thousand prediction for the end of January - early February.

Their prediction is well grounded: a rise of the minimum monthly pay by 50 per cent since January 1 to BRB 30,000, multi-billion credit injections in the form of offsetting (see Supreme Soviet Enactment of December 15, 1993), BRB 125b to be paid for agricultural supplies (see Joint Enactment by the Council of Ministers and Supreme Soviet of December 10, 1993) and the sword of Damocles of the oil and gas problem - promise a January inflation rate in excess of 60 per cent. If we take into account that January is a hard currency contract month, while the December rate fall is only due to the "effect of the end of the year" (in plain language, roubles were needed to pay taxes and to return credits), it becomes obvious that a steep upward movement of the dollar rate is inevitable.

Needless to say, everything relating to the dollar even to a greater extent concerns the German mark. The reason of a more nervous reaction on behalf of the German currency is its short supply in the circulation (7 to 9 times

less than USD). It leads to the Deutschmark both falling and going up relatively quicker than the dollar.

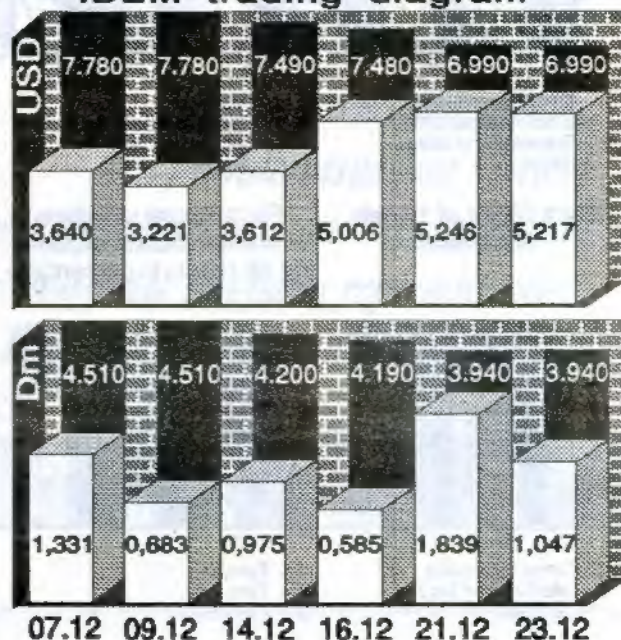
Yet, the fates of the Russian rouble are in the firm hands of the government. It's, to put it mildly, not very market-oriented exchange rate (BRB 4.51 to RUR 1 on December 23) depends on the National Bank more than on any ridiculous supplies and demands. Will the New Year see this vicious attitude continued? The National Bank must be better than anyone else aware that there are also market instruments of exchange rate available.

There are nations in the world with inflation rates of 3 to 5 per cent per year. It is considered a normal thing. There are also some nations where hard currency is depreciated by 7 to 6 per cent per annum. This is too much.

In Belarus the US dollar inflation rate in 1993 was 7.5 to 8 per cent. You are wrong to believe it is an annual figure - 7.5 to 8 per cent per month.

The ready cash dollar became cheaper last year by 2.4 to 2.5 times, considering its purchasing power in Belarus. Indeed, the exchange rate went up from 500 to 5,700 (by 11.4 times), while the inflation brought up the prices by 28 to 30 times. The clearing hard currency also had hard times, its exchange rate lagging behind the inflation 2.1 to 2.2-fold. The conclusion is that savings should not be kept on currency deposit accounts, either (10 to 14 per cent interest per year). Money must be invested in a business at least doubling the currency investments within a year. I tend to believe the rise of a whole range of such services is a matter of the nearest future, particularly taking into account the 60 per cent inflation rate predicted by Mr. S. Bogdankevich for January.

#### IBEM trading diagram





# Women in business



How many businesswomen are there in Belarus? What are they like? Is there sex equality in business? Lyudmila GRYAZNOVA attempts answering these questions.

According to the data released by the Minsk tax inspections, in spring 1993 females constituted among the business people not vested with legal personality 27.3 per cent. They are, generally speaking, entrepreneurs engaged in small businesses or self-employed people. Their social status is of interest (See Fig.1). For instance, among the workers who have gone for small registered businesses there are 7 times fewer females than males; among managerial, engineering and technical personnel - 4 times fewer; and among scientists and college teachers - 3 times fewer. The business sex equality is by far the most pronounced among the unemployed and housewives.

The tax inspection data have also been used to determine the share of females in the managerial staff of the non-state-run companies. The share is 8.2 per cent. Thus, the share of women is much lower in the sphere of medium and large businesses, than in small businesses (See Fig.2).

By analysing the Belarusian press in the second half of 1993 I have singled out three types of entrepreneurs (See Fig.3). Type one are entrepreneurs closely related to the nomenklatura, who use the state capital and do business at a large scale. Most frequently these are state company managers. According to the content analysis results they make 34.7 per cent among all the business people, females constituting 6.2 per cent.

Type two are entrepreneurs related to the nomenklatura, who use an ille-

gally privatized state capital or private capitals and do medium-scale business. They account for 21.7 per cent, females making 20 per cent thereof.

Type three are entrepreneurs with no relation to the nomenklatura, who make an illegal use of state or private capitals and are engaged in small businesses. The group is primarily made up of the so-called commercial tourists. Their share is 43.6 per cent, females making 50 per cent of them. I would like to emphasize that besides the above types of entrepreneurs there is also a specific category of women: wives and mothers-in-law formally put in charge of the companies owned by their husbands and sons-in-law.

As far as the specific feature of female businesses is concerned, it is the falling share of women as the businesses grow larger. According to the data provided by a mass media content analysis, the share of females in the small, medium and large businesses is 50, 20 and 6.2 per cent, respectively. This specific pyramid of a female participation in entrepreneurial activities reminds the female employment pyramid (the more skilled labour, the smaller share of women employed) and the female managerial decision-making pyramid (the higher management level, the lower female participation).

The article has been prepared within the framework of a research project conducted by the Independent Institute for Socio-Economic and Political Studies with a support from the CIPE, USA.

Fig.1 Social and sexual structure of business people not vested with legal personality, in percentage

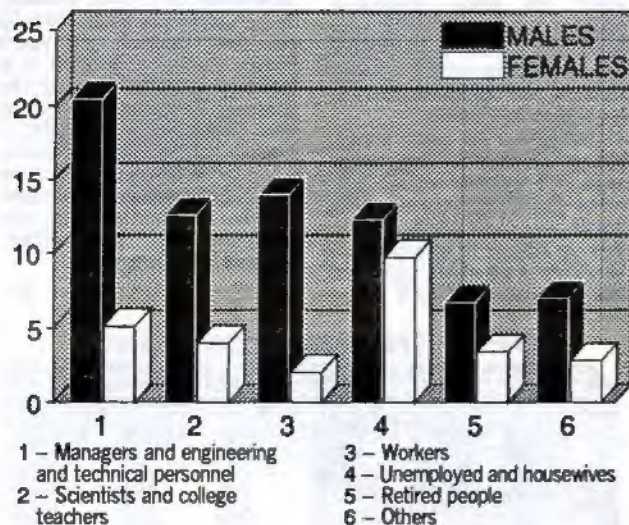


Fig.2 Share of female businesses

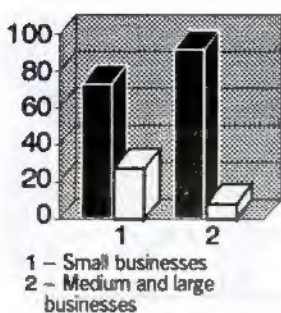
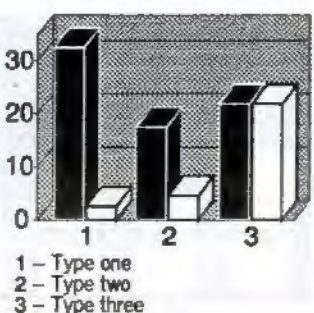


Fig.3 Sexual structure of entrepreneurs, depending on types, in percentage



# Belarus haunted by entrepreneurial ghosts

1993 witnessed a further development of the business trends outlined in the previous years, while at the same time marking some relatively new processes and phenomena in the sphere of business. On the whole it has to be admitted that private initiative, particularly small-scale businesses, has not yet become a significant component of this country's economic potential; the business development has slowed down and is hindered by a great number of difficulties and abnormal approaches.

Although the total number of economic entities in our Republic available by July 1, 1993 (168,000) increased on the same period of 1992 by 74 per cent, those vested with legal personality - by 31.8 per cent (67,500) and those not vested with legal personality - 111 per cent (cca 100,500), the quantity of the economic entities in Belarus is insufficient yet. In this country one economic entity accounts for 63 people, while in the USA, for instance, for 13 or 14 people. The share of active population employed by small companies and limited companies does not exceed 3 per cent of its total.

Besides, in 1993 the rate of new entity formation has slowed down. In particular, there were 2,006 new companies of various ownership forms set up in the 4th quarter of 1992, 1,837 - in the 1st quarter of 1993, and slightly over 1,500 - in the 2nd quarter of 1993. The number of newly founded private companies reduced in the 2nd quarter of 1993 in comparison with the 4th quarter of 1992 from 558 to 357.

An analysis of the small business development represents a special interest (See Table 1). Whereas the total number of the SBs (small businesses) and LCs (limited companies) went up from July 1992 to July 1993 by 64.1 per cent and reached 31,620, the actual number of the active entities (at least those, which submitted any information to the statistical authorities) increased by a mere 23.5 per cent (cca 10,680). Accordingly, the share of active companies decreased from 46 to 34 per cent. The following interpretation of the data can be offered: firstly, the business activities have dwindled, and, secondly, great many companies are hiding from the statistical institutions (and, obviously, from the tax inspection) the fact of being active and getting revenues.

There is a continued tendency of small business development in the circulation, rather than production sphere (See Table 2). The share of SBs and LCs engaged in trade and public catering has gone up from 27.4 to 31.0 per cent, supply and sales - from 6.4 to 9.0 per cent, while the number of industrial ones has fallen from 22.5 to 20.3 per cent and research ones - from 8.7 to 7.1 per cent.

1993 also outlined a trend of closing many business structures and curtailing production. It is a characteristic feature that the number of personnel employed by them reduced in the 1st half of 1993 by about 100 per cent, from 213,700 to 110,700 people (See Table 3). It has to be emphasized that the reaction of the small business entities to the general economic crisis was more adequate to the strict market laws, than the behaviour pattern of the state-run companies: the former tend to reduce staff or close, whereas the latter tend to maintain a covert unemployment, obtain more credits, etc.

The economic recession has affected practically all the forms of the small business structures, except limited liability companies; the number of private and joint-stock companies has been reduced by a third, the personnel of the former being decreased by more than a half, from 51 to 21 thousand persons. In spite of an increased quantity of the active LCs (from about 3,560 to 5,300), their total personnel has dwindled by almost a half (from 103,600 to 55,400).

Among the main factors, which have caused this situation, are the following:

- general economic crisis and hyperinflation excluding any significant long-term investments in the production sphere;
- poor market infrastructure development, which prevents private initiative development and support;
- excessive tax burden combined with a poor organization of accounting system and tax collection (according to some data, as much as one-third of all payable taxes under the laws in effect fail to be exacted);
- unstable economic laws and social sphere imbalances, which gives rise to unsure prospects for many business people to get long-term benefits and encourages speculative operations;
- changed values and guide-lines among a large share of our society, internal

Economist Yefim GERSTEIN is analysing the small business development trends in Belarus. His conclusions, which are illustrated by tables, are convincing but not very comforting.



and external discipline crises, weakened state power and booming processes of bribery, corruption and protectionism. It is a remarkable fact that the business community

states as its chief problems racketeering, high taxes, impeded money circulation (perhaps, it means payment difficulties) and a total lack of chances to get credits.

Basic indicators of small businesses (SB) and limited companies (LC) in Belarus\*

	1st half 1992	1st half 1993	Growth rate
Number of registered companies	19275	31821	164.1
Number of companies to submit reports	8818	10884	123.5
Average personnel (without pluralizers and short-term contract employees)	in pax	85303	130025
Proceeds generated by product/service sales	in Rbl m	11561.8	219218.1

\* The existing statistical report methods consider small businesses and limited companies to be different types of companies, which is erroneous, as the latter may be a form of small businesses. Nonetheless, for lack of more reliable information hereinafter we use the latest data released by the RB State Committee for Statistics once every six months.

Branch structure of Belarusian SBs and LCs

	1992		1st half 1993		Growth of SBs and LCs, %
	Total number of SBs and LCs	Percentage of the total	Total number of SBs and LCs	Percentage of the total	
RB total	8719	100	9270	100	106.3
Industry	1981	22.5	1878	20.3	95.8
including:					
production-related services	145	1.8	181	1.7	111.0
production of consumer goods	817	9.4	798	8.6	97.7
Agriculture and forest and fish farming	158	1.8	138	1.5	88.5
Transport	83	1.1	121	1.3	130.1
Building	1435	16.5	1341	14.5	93.4
Trade and public catering	2383	27.4	2877	31.0	120.2
Supply and sales	556	6.4	830	9.0	149.3
Commercial activities related to market functioning	314	3.6	260	2.8	82.8
Information and computer services	204	2.3	236	2.6	115.7
Research and development	759	8.7	857	7.1	88.8

Basic SB and LC indicators as per ownership forms

	Total qty of companies active			Total personnel, in pax		
	1992	1st half 1993	Growth percent-age	By Jan 1, 1993	By Jul 1, 1993	Growth percent-age
Total for companies of all ownership forms	8719	9270	106.3	213752	110737	51.8
including:						
state-run	1178	1132	96.2	41111	25989	63.2
private	3231	2258	69.8	51064	21135	41.4
leased	40	31	77.5	1215	805	74.5
joint-stock	37	24	64.8	1300	355	27.3
public	149	111	74.4	3184	1184	37.7
economic associations	10	-	-	487	-	-
other collective ownership forms	3683	5306	144.9	103580	55417	53.5
mixed ownership form	513	408	79.5	11841	5742	48.5

# Minsk potable water

By Evgeny SHIROKOV

Many Minsk residents believe that the potable water quality has deteriorated. They attribute the deterioration to the fact that deep-well water is in short supply to meet all the needs of the city and that partially surface water has to be used. Their opinion is not completely correct, because even if only ground water was used, today it would not be a firm guarantee of the potable water quality.

Once the USSR best, the Minsk tap water has become like tap water elsewhere. The reasons are an intense surface and ground water pollu-

tion and a barbarian abuse of the ground water-bearing levels, when more water is taken out than supplied due to the natural diffusion processes. It leads to a rapid transfer of harmful agents from the surface to the water-bearing levels.

Since 1960 at the Minsk Novinki water intake the water chlorine concentration has gone up tenfold and the mineralization fourfold (from 209 to 770 mg per l). The seven Drozdny water intake wells (Vesnyanka district) have shown a bacterial pollution and a growing nitrate concentration. The water qu-

ality at the Zelenovka water intake (Uruchie and Akademgorodok districts) has considerably worsened. The ground water nitrate content (50-60 mg per l) at the Kolodishchi water intake has exceeded by 50 per cent our standards and by 200 per cent the recommended figures of the WHO (World Health Organization). At the same time, there has been a sharp increase in the chloride and manganese levels recorded. At the Volma water intake (near the Minsk Truck Plant) there has been a highly toxic pesticide, cuprosane, detected. The maximum tolerable nitrate level has also been exceeded at the Masyukovshchina water intake.

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# Legal chronicle



**Alexander PLASKOVITSKY** is here as usual to make his comments. Today his article covers the standard-setting acts passed in November.

In between the scandals the Parliament adopted several Laws:

**November 19** it exempted from the value-added tax the products and services meant for diplomatic offices and their personnel, family members included, provided their Belarusian colleagues are not taxed in their home countries.

**November 19** it passed the Law on Consumer Right Protection, effective since January 1, 1994.

The Law describes in detail the consumer rights to information on the product, product quality and safety checks at a seller's expense, replacement of poor-quality or unsuitable goods and responsibility for violating the rights. It guarantees service and maintenance and reimbursement of moral and material losses. In many cases the consumer is entitled to cancelling a contract and having his losses refunded.

Unless otherwise specified, the application time of products shall be 10 and warranty-covered period 1 year after the sale. The season product periods start when the season begins.

The delivery of large-size products over 10 kilograms heavy for repair, marking down, replacement or refund shall be done at the expense of a seller or manufacturer.

The Law also governs other mutual commitments of manufacturers, sellers and buyers, as well as the activities of consumer associations, which are entitled to 10 per cent of the state penalty exacted as a result of their claims in defence of the consumer rights.

**November 23** it passed the Law on Civil Service, effective March 1, 1994, which declares a priority of the civil rights over the national interests and provides for additional privileges for the "nation's servants".

Citizens are entitled to getting information on the state authorities, unless such information represents state, service, commercial or personal secrets.

Foreign nationals or persons without nationality may be employed by the state bodies of power as consultants and experts.

The Law provides for several measures to discourage the civil servants from commercial activities and political partiality. An official is obliged to have any present given by a foreigner, with a price exceeding one minimum

monthly pay, passed over to the state to be used for charity purposes.

**November 24** it adopted the Law on Product Supplies for National Needs, which was to take effect January 1, 1994. A specific list of products/services for meeting commitments under international agreements, as well as to cover the needs of the state management, defence, state security, environment protection, support of the state section of the economy, etc. is to be drawn up by the Parliament and government, as well as by the Regional Soviets in respect of the local needs. The list will also include the name of a customer to conclude a contract with a supplier. It is recommended to select the supplier in a tender and grant him the privileges, which have not yet been formulated. Monopolists will be unable to refuse a state order, because an ungrounded refusal leads to a fine equal to the order amount. The supplier risks a fine of 20 to 50 per cent of the order amount for lack of integrity in face of the state.

**November 24** it passed the Law on Pledge taking effect upon its promulgation, which alters and amends the standards laid down in the Civil Code in effect. A pledge (mortgage, hypothecation, security) can be a result of a contract or parliamentary acts.

A pledge may take the form of any property, which is not withdrawn from the civil circulation and unless its recovery and pledge are not forbidden by the Laws in effect, as well as any proprietary rights, which under the existing Laws are alienable, the pledge right included. Things expected to appear or else to be purchased in the future may also be pawned.

A contract or standard-setting acts can provide for the following types of pledge:

- a pledge, when the pledged object remains with a pledger;
- hypothecation/mortgage (a pledge against the security of land and other real estate);
- a pledge against circulating goods (i.e. different goods of the same value);
- a pledge, when the pledged object is passed over to a pledgee;
- a pledge against right and securities.

A combined pledge is tolerable.

A pledge contract should include the names of the parties thereto, their location/residence, kind of pledge, nature of the pledge-secured requirement, its amount, period of meeting the commitments, list and price of the property pledged, as well as any other terms subject to agreement on initiative from any of the parties to a pledge contract.

The pledged property is recovered:

- as decided by the Court of Justice;
- by a pledgee, if it is specified in the pledge contract, in respect of property worth up to 30 minimum monthly pays;
- in case it does not contradict the Laws in effect, on the basis of an enforcement inscription by Notary Public, the latter being practised, provided no disputes arise.

In view of the parliamentary session in progress, the government, as ever before, has decreased its activity.

**CoME No.752** of November 3: it is yet another manifestation of the government's scandalous love to the Stanford Technology Centre RB. The rights and advantages granted to the Technocentre will be enjoyed by its subsidiaries and joint ventures.

**CoME No.753** of November 3: sets the tax for buying vehicles (except cars and motor-cycles purchased for personal use) at 5 per cent. It altered:

- the procedure of production volume calculation for pipe-lines, oil product trade, agricultural companies, banks, exchanges and insurance, power and trade organizations;
- the periods and forms of reports submitted for payment of road taxes.

**CoME No.754** of November 4: approved the procedure of land site privatization and nationalization. As the Belarusian citizens residing permanently in Belarus, alone, are entitled to the land ownership right, all the other persons have little interest to the document.

However, it should be kept in mind that:

A citizen who owns a land site and a building on it before selling the building to a person deprived of the land ownership right has to apply to the local Soviet of People's Deputies so that the latter can buy the land, whereupon he may sell the building. Otherwise the deal is invalid.

Heirs of the land owner, who do not enjoy the right to land ownership, shall ask the same Soviet to buy from them the land they inherit or allow its use/lease.

The Soviet is granted one month's period to make a decision.

According to **CoME No.760** of November 4 socially-oriented facilities may only be purchased by legal entities

registered in Belarus and by the Belarusian nationals residing permanently on the Belarusian territory.

**CoME No.761** of November 5: approved a new Regulation on the State Committee for State Property Management and Privatization. It deserves mentioning, among other things, that the Committee is entitled to alienating from state-run companies mismanaged property, issuing municipal property privatization permits to foreign investors and bringing actions on invalidating state property contracts. As the Committee has moved one step higher in the hierarchy, its Chairman will be adopted by the Parliament, meanwhile, the former chairman has found himself so far degraded to the rank of first deputy chairman.

**CoME No.774** of November 10: within a broader context of the measures directed at enforcing law and order, it provides for a fine of 20 to 50 minimum monthly pays for infringement on the currency operation rules and introduced since November 10 a state monopoly on selling firearms, except plain-barrel hunting guns. Private detective activities and bank protection by anyone else than militia have been suspended since November 10.

**CoME No.780** of November 15 has introduced liability for:

- failure to declare the financial resources under the joint Enactment by the government and the National Bank of August 11 - a fine of 50 per cent of undeclared amount;
- opening bank accounts beyond Belarus without a permission of the National Bank for concealment of money - a fine of 100 per cent of concealed amount.

Meanwhile, the Chief Tax Inspection has promised not to apply fines, if the guilt is admitted before any checking starts.

**CoME No.781** of November 15 approved a new procedure governing commissioning acceptance of capital investment projects. Acceptance committees shall be nominated by the legal entity, which approved the design plans and specifications, while the natural person shall be substituted by the state authorities to issue it a construction investment license.

The committee is composed of persons representing: the customer, operating organization, prime contractor, designer organization and fire inspection. With a 15 days' notice before the committee begins its operation the following authorities have to be notified: ecology, sanitary and building inspection bodies, state automotive inspection and state labour inspection, while in case of specific projects, for instance, nuclear ones, other relevant authorities, too.

**CoME No.787** of November 16: the government entrusted the State Property Committee and the local authorities to take "preliminary" decisions on privatization in those cases when the final decision is a competence

of the Council of Ministers. The procedure of government decision-making conceived by the Parliament as a measure against the local arbitrariness has become void, although formally the law has been fully complied with. The example is very characteristic and can serve as a model.

**CoME No.791** of November 19 changed the Savings Bank interest rates:

- since December 1, 1993 deposit accounts - 250 per cent per annum;
- since January 1, 1994 sight deposits - 60 per cent.

**CoME No.796** approved the Rules of Sea Vessel Register. The ships owned or used by Belarus and its natural and juridical persons, those 70 per cent built (71) included, are liable to a mandatory registration by the Ministry of Transport and Communications within 30 days after purchase/acquiring. One cannot help developing an impression that registration is becoming a new bureaucratic fashion, because lately the number of registrations has gone up twofold.

In order to have a sea vessel registered, apart from an application, a standard proforma questionnaire and a ship right document, one is expected to submit an awful quantity of all kinds of domestic and international certificates.

**CoME No.799** of November 25: the State Property Committee and the local authorities are entrusted to decide on privatization of unfinished projects, if their completion deadline is exceeded by over two years and unless they are finished in 1994. The state authorities are recommended, before they get down to privatization, to look for other state-run organizations capable of finishing what has been left over by others.

On November 3 the Supreme Economic Court extended the inflation-corrected indemnity procedure to the cases of cargo loss, shortage, damage and deterioration because of the Belarusian freight carrier.

A joint Enactment by the government and the National Bank of November 25 has settled the problem of postal orders within the ex-USSR. Another step has been made towards the independence of the Belarusian money: postal orders are received and given in the bills of the Belarusian National Bank and calculated at its exchange rate in effect at the time of receiving or giving.

In November were published the Methodical Recommendations of the Trade Ministry on Trade and Public Catering Privatization. They state that the national programme of privatizing the trade and public catering outlets is developed by the Trade Ministry and is subject for approval by the State Property Committee. Under a pretext of the total deficiency the privatization is to be slowed down, so that the state might have a chance to have a better care of us, and divided in three stages:

1993-1994 - privatization

of unprofitable, frozen and insignificant outlets, as well as 1 or 2 big shops in every town. The main ways of trade privatization are auctions, contests and contest auctions, which are not mentioned at all in the laws. In case of a contest the guidelines are maximum preservation of the speciality, variety, personnel and business activity, as well as investing at least 40 per cent of the profit. Big shops must be transformed into open joint-stock companies. All in all, 30 per cent of the privatizable facilities is privatized at this stage.

1995-1998 - privatization of food stores 100 to 400 square metres big, clothing and general shops, shopping centres, departmental shops and restaurants. All in all, 50 to 60 per cent of the facilities.

1999-2000 - wholesale trade objects and low-price shops for socially handicapped. 10 to 20 per cent of the facilities.

The state will maintain control of the large joint-stock companies through its control package of their shares. Besides, the local authorities are recommended to add to the list of facilities excluded from privatization, while the shops are recommended to privatize in groups, because it is harder to be separated from the beloved ministry in a group.

The period of leasing the shop premises has been set at 5 to 10 years, whereupon a purchase is possible.

The personnels have been promised a three-year consent to payment in installments with regard to 70 per cent of the amount due.

Nothing surprises me in the approaches of the Trade Ministry, because the functions of a proprietor and privatizer are exercised by the same body.

On November 10 (Enactment No.637) the Minsk City Executive Committee approved the Rules governing the sales of liquid fuels and lubricants in Minsk.

The fee of 2 minimum monthly pays is charged for providing a site for fuel sale and one more minimum monthly pay is charged for a permit (which has appeared after licenses have been abolished).

One site may be given at the same time to several companies. In order to have a site granted, one has to submit to the Committee for Economics the following:

- application;
- copy of a charter;
- fuel purchase contract;
- contract amount payment order;
- fuel transportation license issued by the State Inspection for Industry and Nuclear Power.

The operation hours are coordinated with the district executive committees. Work is allowed at daytime only. Displaying the trader's name, operation hours, fuel brand and price, as well as trading rules is a condition. Some other documents are needed to certify the fuel quality and origin and the seller's qualifications.

## The session closed doors

By Roman YAKOVLEVSKY

Continued from page 1

To a large extent, the allusions directly or indirectly pointed out at the relations with the USA. The same dissatisfaction with Stanislav Shushkevich was expressed also earlier, in June 1993 before his visit to Washington. The accusations have been reiterated, ironically, now, a month before the planned visit of Mr. Clinton to Minsk.

A day after Shushkevich was receiving birthday greetings, the Speaker lost control of himself right at the parliamentary session. His exchange of opinions with the rapporteur became abundant in non-parliamentary phraseology. The session took a decision to work behind closed

doors, while in the afternoon it was announced that the Speaker had had a sudden health problem and had been hospitalized with a diagnosis of hypertension crisis.

It should be noted that Mr. Lukashenko's equidistant position from all the parliament groups is received by many deputies as the third force. Lukashenko was also accused of intending to use the report materials as an election campaign platform at the possible future presidential election.

The opposition believes this development at the session put an end to the issues of the Kebich government resignation and setting the date for an early election.

After the information on

Stanislav Shushkevich's disease the parliamentary majority entrusted Premier Vyacheslav Kebich to head the Belarusian delegation at the CIS Ashgabat summit. As for the deputies themselves, they have decided to have a break till January 18. Opposition leader Mr. Zyanon Paznyak believes the date chosen for the beginning of the second round of the session is not incidental. US President Mr. Clinton is expected to visit Minsk on January 16. As has been reiterated at many occasions, the American party would see the early multipartisan election in March as a clear indicator of the democratic processes going on in Belarus. Yet, the Supreme Soviet has abstained from any decision to this effect shortly before Mr. Clinton's visit.



After heated and insulting debates at the Supreme Soviet session, deputies Lukashenko (left) and Markovich are letting steam off in between the sittings.

Sergey GRITS



# In Belarus no one but KGB interested in us

Last year in March MEN brought the results of a public opinion poll on mass media in Belarus. The poll was held under the auspices of the Independent Institute for Socio-Economic and Political Studies (IIEPS). The report covering the results of the poll was written by the Institute's Director Doctor of Sociology Oleg Timofeevich Manaev.

One can hardly imagine something as remote from the image of an institute as the IIEPS is. Two rented rooms on the fourth floor of the Svislach Hotel, a few tables, some computers, a fax machine and a copier - this is all as far as the material assets of the Independent Institute for Socio-Economic and Political Studies are concerned. One can hardly imagine a more "non-professional" appearance than Oleg Manaev has. I am not going to describe it, looking at his photo is quite sufficient. Manaev looks a perfect "leftist" and somewhat of an anarchist. I am ignorant of Manaev's political sympathies as a young man, one thing is a sure fact, he was difficult to control.

Back in 1974 shortly before his graduation from



the Department of Journalism of the Belarusian State University Manaev and some of his colleagues wrote a letter to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Belarus dwelling on the "stuffy" atmosphere dominating his department. The result was quick to follow and his planned employment by a youth newspaper was substituted for a two-year conscription service with armoured troops.

Upon failing to become a journalist, the destiny wanted Manaev to make a sociologist. After his army service he

found his way to the University Sociological Centre. Within 18 years of working for the University he defended two dissertations and covered a long way from a junior research worker to a professor at the Chair of Sociology. His final achievement as yet is that in 1992 he set up in cooperation with a team of young scientists, politicians, businessmen and journalists a first ever Belarusian private institute for sociology. The idea was prompted by political, as well as scientific considerations.

In 1988 Manaev took part in the formation of the Belarusian Popular Front (BPF). In winter 1989 he was in charge of BPF leader Zyanon Paznyak's election campaign when the latter ran for a seat at the USSR Supreme Soviet. Gradually, there was the core of the would be institute consolidated within the national democratic movement. Meanwhile, in 1990 they organized a new party, UDPB - the United Democratic Party of Belarus. Manaev made a report on the draft rules at its constituent congress.

The next step was founding the IIEPS, which is a re-

search and political centre, as well as a place where democratically minded people have an opportunity to meet.

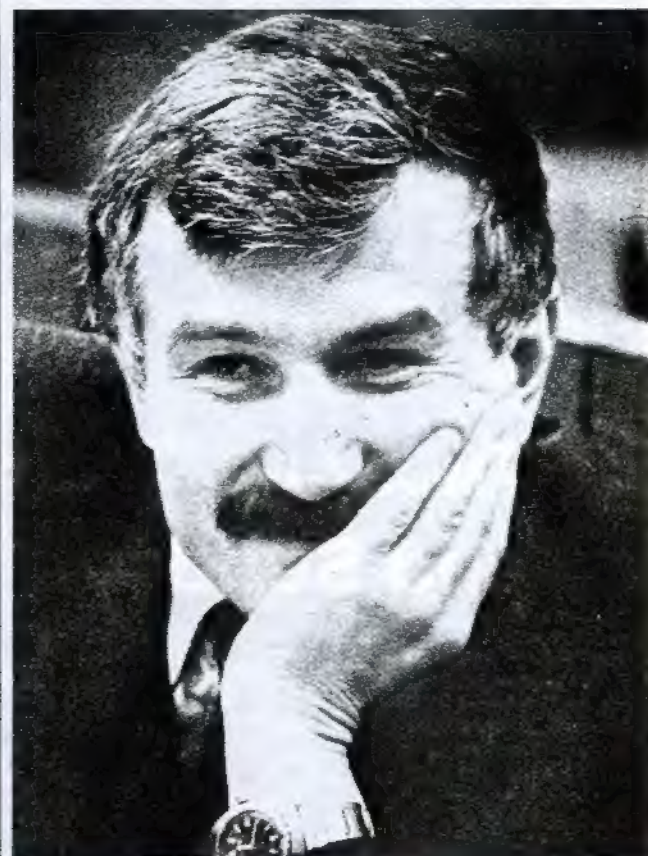
As far as the institute's research activities are concerned, within two years of its existence it has become a permanent supplier of analytical materials for the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, International Centre of Support to Private Businesses in Washington, UNESCO and Soros Foundation. Incidentally, in 1992 Manaev became a cofounder of, and advisor to, the Soros Foundation - Belarus.

Last year alone the institute prepared 20 bulky reports on the 9 main directions of research.

Yet, if there are any Belarusian organizations interested in the institute's activities, it is the KGB. Manaev is disappointed because of it. He somehow believes that his work may benefit not just foreigners alone, and those who spy on them.

Phone 204993.

## Faces and images



By Roman YAKOVLEVSKY

The main topic of the Belarusian politics last year were the issues related to the economic union. Put for consideration were its two options: a broader one within the CIS framework and a narrow one, with Russia. The government and the majority of the Supreme Soviet leadership favoured the idea of a comprehensive economic union with Russia. The only member of the Supreme Soviet Presidium to abstain from voting in favour of a union with Russia was Mr. Alexander Sosnov.

Alexander Sosnov was born in Gomel on August 14, 1947. He graduated from the Gomel University, Department of Economics. He defended his Candidate (Doctor) dissertation in economic service labour improvement. Before his army service, he finished a technical secondary school for mechanical engineering and had various jobs with building companies. Upon completing his training in economics, he taught at the Gomel Polytechnic Institute and as its head of a professorship left it for the Belarusian Parliament.

Alexander Sosnov's election platform was supported by the Belarusian Popular Front. It was based on the ideas of liberalism. At the initial stage of his parliamentary career Sosnov was member of the Democratic Deputy Club, which, according to Sosnov himself, collapsed. From its ruins sprang up a relatively small BPF Opposition within the Supreme Soviet. At present Sosnov is a member of no deputy group. He is in charge of the Standing Committee for Labour, Prices and Social Protection.

In his time off he is fond of reading books on economics. His passion is shared by his spouse and mother of their two children, who is also an economist. He likes watching tennis and ice-hockey on TV. His favourite beverage is gin and tonic.

Sosnov believes the formation of his political outlook was influenced by the European liberals, Hajek, etc. Perhaps, it explains his proximity to the United Democratic Party of Belarus. Among the political activists he admires Ludwig Erhard. Sosnov had attracted the attention of observers long before he took a negative position in respect of an

economic union with Russia. He explains his negative attitude to the union by its unequal nature. Sosnov also favours introduction of a national monetary unit. Last year Parliament Speaker Mr. Stanislav Shushkevich twice proposed Sosnov for nomination as Vice Speaker. According to the voting results, Sosnov's rating among the corps of deputies was about one hundred and fifty votes. It was not enough to become Vice Speaker. Sosnov's explanation of his failure is that the parliamentary majority "have learned his views too well". If his nomination had been considered during the initial parliamentary session, the voting results might have been different.

Among the contemporary political figures Sosnov tends to follow closely the career of Mr. Yegor Gaidar. Sosnov believes that an equal union with Russia is impossible today, because the Russian economy is far ahead of us in terms of its reforms. In many issues Sosnov supports Speaker Stanislav Shushkevich, while believing the position of the head of the Parliament is not tough enough, meaning his differences with the parliamentary majority. According to Sosnov, Shushkevich's position is very much close to that of Mr. Gorbachev's.

"Whatever happens, is for the better" is Sosnov's motto, although he considers himself a pragmatic. He is ready to support anyone who is dedicated to the economic reforms. Decency is the main feature of the human nature valued by Sosnov. Unlike so many other people, Sosnov is not disappointed by his close encounters with the so-called "political backyard". His idea of big politics has remained the same as it was before his political career started. Sosnov sees himself as a person avoiding conflicts. He intends to remain in politics.

According to observers, politician Alexander Sosnov belongs to no political team, which to a certain degree limits his political prospects. There is a major rotation predicted for 1994 in the highest echelons of the Belarusian power. Will the possible new Belarusian leaders of power need such independent politicians as Alexander Sosnov?

# Why I don't feel like going to cast my vote

By Yuri DRAKOKHRUST

Continued from page 1

Yet, seeing in the ballot-paper the names of the BPF and other nationally-minded organizations make one think twice, too. It was not such an awfully long time ago, under the romantic perestroika, that the national democrats seemed freedom fighters, while the national idea seemed an innocent and even exotic addition to their liberal intentions. Probably, it was an illusion even then. No more illusions are left now. The national idea transformed into savage forms of russophobia, while the thirst for justice has evolved in an anti-capitalist and antiliberal rhetoric, which quite often literally coincides with the similar communist rhetoric. Although the national movement is opposed to the present administration, its politics shows already now some traces of quite an ominous nature. The opposition at one time recommend the government to replace editors-in-chief of the newspapers with the nationally-minded ones they have selected. At some other time they decide from what countries priests should come to

Belarus and from which ones should not. There are times when the nationally-minded politicians make an ethnic test of the college teachers to inspect how fast the main ethnical group representatives are promoted. All this is accompanied by an obsessive anti-Russian propaganda of the Russians as an immanent evil imperial force seeking to destroy Belarus and guilty of all its misfortunes.

Definitely, this is far from the only focus in the opposition politics. But ignoring the above tendencies is no longer possible. The tendencies in question are vividly manifested now, so what is going to happen when and if the people promoting these trends come to power? There is much evidence that the tendencies will be driven to the utmost level. Whereas in, say, the Baltic states the problem of the Russian language is a problem of ethnic minorities, in Belarus this is a problem related to the main ethnical group. The nationally-minded intellectuals, in case they come to power, are extremely unlikely to resist the temptation of using the state

machinery in order to make their fondest dreams come true. As the share of managers within the national movement is negligible, the old state machinery will be entrusted with carrying out belarusization. As for these guys, they will do what they can, and they can do a lot, they have showed only too well more than once.

On the other hand, one cannot help asking the question: why for so many years the Belarusian society has failed to produce a democratic political formation at least comparable in its influence with the nationals. The representatives of the national movement themselves have to offer the following explanation: any political group is unstable and unbalanced without a national unity. No matter how little influential the national forces are, they constitute the only real opposition to the communist concrete, which is immobilizing the Belarusian society. Even if it is true, why is it so inevitable to make a choice imposed by the circumstances and choose a lesser evil? Why do I have to sanctify with my vote the dictatorship of ideas?

Yes, there is one more option: the multi-profile party of the Belarusian power. These people are immune to

any ideas whatsoever and have grown into the tissue of life so well, that they seem part of the landscape. One has an impression that they are guided by social group instincts. They are not the kind to start building a crystal palace, they would rather live and let others live. The Belarusian establishment is easy to predict years in advance. The big problem is the prediction is not very comforting. It cannot be dismissed that it is the processes going on within the managerial elite biomass, that ultimately determine the progress of the Belarusian society. Yet, voting for a biological process is somewhat annoying. As John Canes used to say, we are all dead persons in the long run. As a short-term prospect, seeing the same old masters of life in their old places, hearing their inarticulate speeches and understanding you were the one to prolong this ugly idyll with your vote - I am sorry.

All the above said is not a manifestation of the mysterious Slavic soul yearning for an unrealistic ideal, but rather an awareness of the responsibility involved and reluctance to be guided by illusions.

## Exposervice 1994 events

Jan 24-28: 2nd International Exhibition AGROIMPEX '94  
Mar 1-4: International Exhibition ANYTHING FOR A LADY  
Mar 1-4: Week of Belarusian Fashion  
Mar 1-4: Fair FLOWERS & DECORATION  
Apr 2: 8th International Universal MINSK FAIR SPRING '94  
Jun 7-10: 2nd International Fair EVERYTHING FOR HOME  
Jun 7-10: 2nd International Fair of Ceramics & Glass TERRACOTA '94  
Jun 7-10: Industrial Fair LIGHTING EQUIPMENT  
Jul 2: International Exhibition BELCHEMISTRY '94  
Jul 2: Industrial Exhibition TOOLS & AUXILIARIES

Jul 2: Industrial Exhibition INSTRUMENTATION  
Sep 14-17: 3rd International Fair BISTRO '94  
Sep 14-17: International Exhibition WINES & BEVERAGES  
Oct 5-8: 9th International Universal MINSK FAIR AUTUMN '94  
Nov 9-11: 2nd International Show MODERN MEDICINE TO CHERNOBYL  
Nov 16-19: 3rd International Show MODERN OFFICE & BANK  
\*: Mobile International Universal Fair BALTEXPO  
\*: Exhibition BULGARIAN PRODUCTS  
December: Minsk Christmas Souvenir & Gift Fair

Exposervice reserves the right to change dates and/or topics : \* - Date to be announced later Contact phone: 546134



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## UNEMPLOYMENT GROWTH

in Belarus is one of the fastest among CIS countries. According to the national employment service the number of totally jobless grew more than twice (from 31.4 thousand early in January to 67.3 thousand late in November). The unemployment level is 1.3 per cent. The job demand also went down from 28 thousand in May to less than 17 thousand today. Three winter months will drive out of job another 9.5 thousand workers.

## CRIME RATE

increased 6.9 per cent in 1993 over 1992, but the rate of growth has slowed since the 30 per cent in 1992 over 1991.

## AVERAGE MONTHLY SALARY

in Belarus was Rbl 49,349 in January-November 1993 and increased 11.7 fold against the same period of 1992. In November it was Rbl 129,132.

## INVESTMENT PROJECTS

within the Italian credit line were approved by the government. The list comprises purchase of 3 process equipment sets for children food manufacture (\$44 m), of process line to make glass bottles for the above food (\$2.5 m), of machinery to produce lids to the above bottles (\$15 m), as well as of a kit of process equipment for making crackers. All the loans were granted to respective Ministries. All the equipment mentioned will be shipped by Italian companies.

## NICKOLAI KOSTIKOV

the Council of Ministers Chairman Deputy and Jaques de Larosier, EBRD President, signed two credit agreements worth ECU 45.85 m. The greater loan (ECU 40.1 m) will be granted to the Energy Ministry with the aim to modernize the Orsha heat power station located in the North-Eastern part of the republic. Within this project construction of the first steam-gas combined power unit of 61 MW is planned. Another ECU 5.75 m will be given to the Company of Minsk wholesale market.

## STARTING FROM APRIL 1994

the citizens of the republic will receive new national passports. The document is based on the concept of a unified Belarusian passport, while diplomatic and service ones will remain (as well as the sailor's passport). The Council of Ministers' Decree states that the diplomatic passport will be given to the people's deputies and to the highest governmental and Foreign Affairs' officials, while the service foreign passports will be provided to medium-rank state machinery staff. Every citizen will be entitled to put an exit visa into his new national passport. No invitation is needed.

## THE NATIONAL STRIKE

of educational and science workers is announced by the Professional Trade Union for 3 days starting January 12. The Industrial Branch Trade Unions are planning to hold a protest action "No to the people's misery!" on the same day. Enterprises will stop work for one hour and organize meetings to which people's deputies and industry chiefs are invited.

## THE DEFENSE MINISTRY

signed a cooperation agreement with that of Moldova for the year 1994. It is planned that several cooperation points may be further transformed into intergovernmental agreements.

## US PRESIDENT BILL CLINTON

will be welcomed in Belarus on January 16. In preparation for the visit the Council of Ministers approved the treaty draft on promotion and protection of investments and a list of privileges for US investors into Belarus economy. The State Committee for Foreign Economic Relations will also participate in the talks.

## FOR THE FIRST TIME

in the Belarusian language a book by George Soros, one of the leading American businessmen, the founder of humanitarian funds in many countries and the expert on global economic and socio-political problems was published in 2.5 thousand copies by the Soros Foundation - Belarus.

## BELARUS POPULAR FRONT LEADER

Zyanon Paznyak spoke on the results of the 1st half of the Supreme Soviet's session at the opposition's press-conference on December 23. 15 months' work had no result. Both the Council of Ministers and the Supreme Soviet contributed to the deepening of the

national economy crisis. The fact that the session will not resume their sittings until January 18, is explained by the Supreme Soviet majority fear that Clinton would wish to speak to the session during his visit, said the opposition leader.

## RUSSIAN TROOPS WILL STAY

within Belarusian territory for another 6 years. The withdrawal schedule states that signal troops, engineering, land, air-landing and reconnaissance forces have to be called away in 1993, the radio-electronic counter-fight forces - in 1994, air and signal troops of central command of Russia - in 1995, missile strategic forces - in 1996, all the rest of the regiments - till the end of 1999.

## MASS MEDIA CENTER

the joint American-Belarusian company started their activities in Minsk. The main purpose is to help the non-state-run mass media.

## THE NATIONAL MILITARY ACADEMY

formed on the basis of Minsk higher command military college, will receive the first levy of officers by September 1995. At present Belarus has no bodies of military sciences.

## Minsk Economic News - newsletter for business people

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Vienna-Zurich	7	12.55	14.05	B2 869
Zurich-Vienna	7	14.50	16.05	B2 870
Vienna-Minsk	7	16.50	19.50	B2 870
Minsk-Berlin	1, 3, 5	13.00	13.50	B2 891
Berlin-Minsk	1, 3, 5	14.55	17.40	B2 892
Minsk-Frankfurt	1, 3	12.10	14.00	B2 893
Frankfurt-Minsk	1, 3	14.55	18.40	B2 894
Minsk-Warsaw	2, 6	11.50	12.10	B2 895
Warsaw-Minsk	2, 6	13.10	15.30	B2 896
Minsk-Shannon	3, 5	07.05	09.00	B2 897
Shannon-New-York	3, 5	14.00	16.00	E1 105
New-York-Shannon	2, 4	19.00	06.15	E1 104
Shannon-Minsk	3, 5	10.30	16.00	B2 898
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- Jan 16: Concert of Piano Music.  
Wolfgang Manz, Germany.  
Jan 23: State Academic Symphony  
Orchestra of Belarus, conducted by  
Dominique Fanal, France,  
soloing Valery Kastelsky, piano.  
Strauss and Ravel.

- Jan 26-27: Elena Kamburova's Poetical  
Song Show.

## Chamber Hall

- Jan 14: Concert to commemorate  
J. Brahms' 160th anniversary.  
Jan 25: Night of Russian Romance, by  
Svetlana Danilyuk, mezzo-soprano,  
& Tatiana Vishnyakova, piano.

## BELARUS BOLSHOI

- Jan 8: N. Rimsky-Korsakov - King's Bride  
Jan 9: P. Chaikovsky - Sleeping Beauty  
Jan 12: P. Chaikovsky - Serenade  
M. Ravel - Bolero  
Armsheimer - Cavalry at Rest  
Jan 13: U. Soltan - King Stakh's Wild Hunting  
Jan 14: A. Khachaturyan - Spartacus  
Jan 15: P. Chaikovsky - Iolanta

Contact phones: 341156 - promotion manager  
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